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## Lake yields copper giant

34,000-pound nugget to be centerpiece of Keweenaw display

By John Flesher / Associated Press

A gigantic block of copper was raised from the bottom of Lake Superior on Thursday and hauled ashore for display on Michigan's Keweenaw Peninsula, where mining was a way of life for more than a century.

"It's all in one piece -- no stresses, no strains," said project coordinator Bob Barron, who discovered the boulder a decade ago and has worked since then to retrieve it. "It's a gorgeous hunk of the Keweenaw."

The boulder, which lay nearly one mile offshore in 30 feet of water, was lifted onto a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers barge by a crane that had a built-in scale. The slab's estimated weight: 34,000 pounds.

It measures more than 18 feet long, 8 feet wide and 15 inches thick. The predominant color is a light green, with patches of brown and purple, Barron said in a phone interview.

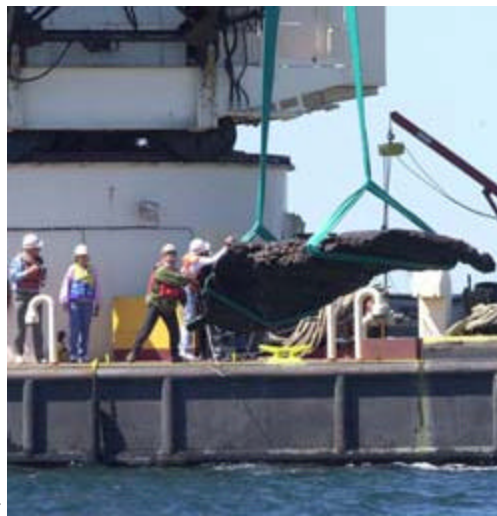
It will be one of the world's largest copper specimens on display and is the biggest chunk of copper ever pulled from the lake, said officials with the Seaman Mineral Museum at Michigan Technological University in Houghton.

Barron and his team used a 20-ton jack last weekend to lift the boulder and slip heavy-duty nylon straps underneath. On Thursday, he attached the straps to the crane, which easily brought the boulder to the surface. The boulder was later transferred to a flatbed truck.

"I think it will be a real shot in the arm for the area," he said. "It will be a big tourist draw."

Volcanic activity millions of years ago created vast deposits of copper on the Keweenaw, which juts some 80 miles into Lake Superior in the northwestern corner of the Upper Peninsula.

Aboriginals mined copper between 3,000 and 7,000 years ago, using it for weapons and tools. White explorers discovered it anew in the mid-



Michele Jokinem / Associated Press

**Members of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers guide a recovered copper boulder from Lake Superior near Eagle Harbor onto the barge H.J. Schwartz.**

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1800s, touching off a mineral rush and economic boom.

Mining ended in the region by the late 1960s. Although there was more copper underground, producing it had become too costly to compete with open-pit operations elsewhere, said Stan Dyl, director of the Seaman Museum.

The region still celebrates its mining heritage; a national historical park was established there in 1992.

For now, the boulder will be stored inside a building at the privately operated Quincy Mine Hoist north of Hancock, where visitors can see how miners and equipment once were lowered deep into the earth. A video program will show footage of the slab on the lake bottom and the salvage operation, manager Ed Yarbrough said.

Michigan Tech is raising funds to move the Seaman Museum from the university campus to the Quincy Mine Hoist grounds. Officials plan to make the copper boulder the museum's centerpiece.

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